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## Maximum Expectation from Pupils - One of the Characteristic Features of Inclusion

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### Abstract

We perceive communication, cooperation, application of differentiation and individualization, maximum expectation from pupils and respect among participants of education as characteristic features of inclusive education. In this paper we carry out qualitative and quantitative analysis of data gained from six selected indicators relating to the *maximum expectation from pupils* in the Czech primary schools, which we perceive as a necessary condition for inclusion. As a research tool we used the Czech version of the questioner *Framework for self-evaluation of conditions of education 2007* from which we have selected criteria specifying the characteristics of cooperation and analysed them.

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### 1. Introduction

Education supporting *inclusion* requires a stimulating and friendly school environment, mainly based on mutual respect among school staffs and pupils and appropriate method of communication among pupils and teachers. At the same time, it aims at develop of the inner potential of each pupil and at supporting of integration into social environment in a classroom and ensuring safe climate. To the above mentioned aspects of inclusion we also focused on analysing the obtained data through the research with the aim to determine what conditions teachers create to their pupils in primary schools in education from the view of inclusion and how they evaluate these conditions themselves and verbalize them. The research is a part of extended research project *Special Needs of Pupils in the Context of the Framework Educational Program for Basic Education*, implemented at the Masaryk University in

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Given that *maximum expectation from pupils* among the participants of the educational process is considered as one of the features of inclusive education (which can't be separated from other features characterizing inclusion) we present at the beginning of this paper the overall concept of research, followed by the findings focused about to maximum expectation from pupils.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Concepts of *inclusion* and integration are widely debated issues across many countries and their use is considered according to their meaning. While inclusion means in relation to student to be part of the local community from the beginning "and part from the start", integration means that the aim is to integrate the pupil back into mainstream education, because at some point had been earmarked (Watkins, 2009). Inclusion is now understood as a human rights issue that concerns a wider range of learners than those with special educational needs (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2011).

Complexity is apparent in the terminology of typology of six different ways of thinking about inclusion (Ainscow, 2006), which influence the educational system of each country. When we talk about inclusion, we mean it's wider and procession conception. In defining this concept, we perceive it as an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination (Obiakor, 2012). We combine this concept with another concept - the quality of student life (see also too components of quality – the cognitive development of the learner and the role of education in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and/or creative and emotional development in the UNESCO *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* (2009).

Also Czech educational system is on the way to inclusion. The Czech schools have entered the idea of autonomy in legal, economic and educational area. Changes have been enshrined in many legislative documents. Educational autonomy was supported by the statutory definition of the so-called two-level curriculum. The curriculum at national level in primary education introduces the *Framework Educational Programme for Basic Education* which is compulsory and also the starting point for the development of school curricula and schools can be profiled according to their current conditions, visions and objectives by them. National curriculum emphasizes teaching strategies that support the development of co-operation among pupils and define cooperation as one of the key competencies.

## 3. Research methodology

For analysing the aspects mentioned above we used quantitative and qualitative approach. As fundamental research tool we used the Czech version of the questioner *Framework for self-evaluation of conditions of education 2007* (modified version of the British original *Index for inclusion* – Booth & Ainscow, 2002) and the qualitative content analysis of the school curriculum from eight schools.

The survey involved almost 60 teachers from eight schools. It was a deliberate choice in which we focused on equitable representation of rural or urban schools. Urban schools are mostly *fully organized*. Number of students is *from 217 to 649*. Number of *teachers* is among *16 and 41*. From rural schools there was one fully organized and three schools were listed among *small schools*. The number of pupils is among *45 to 165 pupils*. In view of social and cultural background of children it deals much more homogeneous environment than contemporary urban schools in general.

From the general quantitative analysis we obtained information, which criteria of the inclusion are evaluated as the best, worst, and that criteria among which are the biggest differences. From qualitative analysis, we obtained a set of arguments for sub-criteria, which justify their ratings and also an idea about how to improve the conditions for inclusion (Kratochvílová, Havel & Filová, 2009).

After this first analysis, we set the inclusion goal: to further analyse the basic characteristics of inclusion in schools, which are necessary for an inclusive environment. Basic characteristics we define as follows:

1. *Communication* – how much schools ensure the conditions for inclusive education it depends on communication among all members of the community to which education relates. It is not just about communication among teachers and pupils, pupils themselves, teachers among themselves but also the broader communication beyond the school.
2. *Cooperation* – one of the features of inclusive schools is cooperation at all levels: cooperation among pupils, cooperation among educational staff, cooperation among school management and other workers, cooperation with the external environment, especially with professionals who assist during integration of children with special educational needs in the schools and classes. Important is also cooperation with parents.
3. *Application of differentiation and individualization in education* – ensures that all pupils can learn optimally and can achieve their maximum through their differences. The starting point of individualization and differentiation is a diagnostic activity of teacher in classroom leading to define the learning objectives (according to individual). A teacher can differentiate education in terms of content, timing, methodology and organization.
4. *Maximum expectation from pupils* – in developing and creating (supporting of all qualities of pupils' life) conception of education, it is necessary to each pupil would be perceived as a person and teachers would work sensitively with statements, whom they express their expectations towards child.
5. *Respect among pupils and school staff* – respect is generally unconditional acceptance of each individual. Acceptance and respect due to the fact that I am, I exist. In inclusive school is required the respect at all possible levels: pupil - pupil, pupil - teacher, teacher - teacher, teacher - non-teacher and headmaster - employee etc.

During the next stage of the research we focus on the description of the five features of inclusion in the schools. For each category, mentioned above, as first we choose the criteria selected from all three parts of the questionnaire *Framework for Self-evaluation Conditions of Education* that characterize them. After this step we did clear quantitative evaluation of individual criteria, than we commented the obtained values by examples from a qualitative analysis of teachers' argumentation (more in Kratochvílová, Havel & Filová, 2011). In terms of scope in this paper we now present one of the features of inclusive school – *maximum expectation from pupils*.

#### 4. Findings

From the skills of teachers and pupils to work with teaching objectives, is divided the choice of teaching strategies of teachers, defining learning tasks for pupils, activities mediating specific curriculum and adequate methods of evaluation, which returns to a specific aim. Necessary is the targeting leading of pupils to work with the learning objectives by teacher. In the personally developing model of learning is essential to be familiar with objective, to which, both teaching activities of teachers and learning activities of pupils, should reach. Teacher should enter with its clear wording in front of pupils and would be able to transfer it into a language understandable for pupils. An appropriate motivation, feedback and belief in pupil achievement, which teacher is also able to explicitly express, he supports pupils to achieve their *maximum results*. Indicators, largely determining the leadership of pupils and own interpretation of the arguments is documented by quotations of participating respondents.

##### *Achieving of maximum results is expected from all pupils*

In the overall evaluation of the questionnaire, this indicator was among the worst evaluated (average 5,5). As though teachers only slowly realized that there is no absolute maximum, only personal. Some schools told about increasing attention for diagnostic work and mentioned the need for further education of teachers in this area. According to our opinion, it is the personal character of teachers, in connection with their acceptance of humanistic philosophy of education. Very useful is also a focus on pupil's self-evaluation which enables children to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses and consciously work on their development and also take responsibility for their own learning.

Exactly half of the monitored schools in some form say that *their teachers follow the possibilities of setting the personal maximum of all children*. To achieve personal maximum of individuals, they try to use an inner motivation. In evaluating they *prefer orientation on the own progress of children* (so-called individual relational norm) than

their mutual comparison and competition. *In the classes are minimized the materials that have the character of labelling (black dots, etc.), emphasis is placed on development of self-evaluation skill.*

At one school is used a *verbal evaluation*. This school also in its arguments to this indicator exactly states that pupils *are classified only after a careful discussing topic*. There is a question, whether everybody has enough time for it and whether they can come to the new topic truly individualized. In this context, other school states that there *are offered extra challenges for gifted pupils and individual tasks for more practicing for slowly children. We focus on the support in overcoming learning uncertainty or fear of failure for weaker pupils.*

***Support for pupils, for whom the Czech language is not a native language, is coordinated with the support of their learning as such***

This indicator is included to the best evaluated criteria by its evaluation. Achieved average 6,4 and a small variance between minimum and maximum (6-7), reduces some general formulation: *We try to do a maximum support for these pupils*. Such an argument cannot be considered as an answer to the guidance questions.

From the list of arguments is also evident that in most schools are only educated pupils with the Czech native language, so this situation is not dealt with in schools. However, teaching staff should be prepared for the future, which is related to further education again. Therefore arguments lack the specificity: *Currently pupils from foreign-language environment do not attend our school. If so, their support would be seen as a responsibility of all teachers. Or: We believe that there would be any reason not to expect results of high level from these pupils (assuming their reflection, for example in the Czech language).* Only one school indicated that they *have been already working with the Centre for Integration of minorities*.

***Pupils are actively engaged in their own learning***

This item is closely related to one of the key competencies of the current curriculum for basic education, the responsibility for learning. Monitored schools are convinced that their pupils are led to participate in the projects, realization and reflection of their own learning. It is evidenced by the relatively high average reached the value nearly 6,3. Answers of individual schools are different in the extent of specificity and generality again. From the relatively large number of arguments, it seems to know the considerable effort in developing of all pupils in the sub-items of learning competencies at all school. *Pupils are encouraged to be responsible for their own learning - actively participate in setting the criteria for evaluation, self-evaluation and planning their further learning (in the process of teaching during lessons, consultations in three).*

An important argument is that *during lessons is explained what students should learn, what is the aim of their work*. Just like that each pupil can monitor and regulate his own learning process. Equipment is also important. *Equipment in the classroom allows an autonomous learning. Pupils can independently use the library and sources of information technology*. Three schools explicitly state that *their pupils are taught how to make notes from textbooks and how to organize their work*. Pupils are also taught how to present their work in spoken, written or other form, individually or in groups. One school adds that *within the differentiated learning allows pupils the choice of learning content, as well as forms and methods*. Part of strategy is also *a free choice of tasks and solution of practical situations*.

***Self-evaluation and evaluation support the performance of each pupil***

Although all monitored schools, in the arguments mentioned in the previous item, expressed in the sense that their pupils are led to self-evaluation supporting their learning competencies; there is shown that they are not fully aware of the importance of formative method of evaluation and self-evaluation for the growth of their performance. It is evidenced by the low average reached the value 5,4 and also the fact that this average is evaluated as a one of the worst indicators. This indicator, we also included among these ones characterizing the level of individualization and differentiation necessary for the effective inclusion.

Only two schools work purposefully and systematically with pupil's self-evaluation, which is documented by the argument that *pupils regularly evaluate not only the results of their activities, but also the learning process and the causes of success or failure*. They are looking for opportunities what a change they should make in their own learning. The self-evaluation is one of the six components having a significant influence on the development of self-regulated learning (in addition to teaching strategies, practical implementation of the self-regulatory strategies,

feedback on the effectiveness of self-regulation strategy, self-monitoring and social support). Without self-evaluation, self-reflection, awareness of personal capabilities and self-conception, pupil cannot manage to his learning. The success of pupil in learning and its control are influenced by his own potentialities and external sources - especially parents, teachers and classmates. It is necessary to bring to life of our classes more comprehensive look at the evaluation, whose integral part is the autonomous self-evaluation of pupil, which is not implemented occasionally, but is a part of the whole system, model of a *comprehensive developing evaluation*.

### ***Teachers are interested in learning support and active participation of all pupils***

Teachers of monitored schools in their arguments describe the monitoring of development of all pupils and the use of knowledge from monitoring for planning their development. At the same time there is information about how much depends on the number of pupils in the classroom. Only in two schools is appeared the view to teaching by pupils' eyes or getting feedback from pupils, which *may be one of the starting points for planning other learning activities*. Other teachers actually lose an important motivational element in the learning process. This imbalance is likely to cause an average value 5,8.

The fact that the schools are aware of the importance of this indicator of the actual inclusion is documented in the arguments such as: *We try to look at teaching and provided support through the eyes of students. Or: Teachers monitor the development of all pupils during lessons*. An important attribute of learning support of pupils may be a situation, in which *attempts to removal the barriers in learning of one pupil are perceived as opportunities for improving the learning of all*.

### **Conclusion**

Among the arguments of schools are substantial differences related to their degree of specificity. We can to say, that in the Czech Republic there is currently undergoing transition among integration and inclusion that best describes dimorphic inclusion/integration (Lechta, 2010).

Some schools justify evaluation of the criteria on very specific arguments which demonstrate their real life, which is occasionally missed in some schools and criteria. Generally we can say that teachers only slowly realize that there is no absolute maximum in education, only personal. That is why a focus on pupil's self-evaluation which enables children to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses and consciously work on their development and also take responsibility for their own learning.

The important is that during lessons is explained what students should learn, what is the aim of their work. Just like that each pupil can monitor and regulate his own learning process. There is shown that primary schools are not fully aware of the importance of formative method of evaluation and self-evaluation for the growth of pupils' performance. An important attribute of learning support of pupils may be a situation, in which attempts to removal the barriers in learning of one pupil are perceived as opportunities for improving the learning of all.

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